



# QUEEN ELIZABETH *Scholars*



## RESILIENCE AND CREATIVITY IN THE FACE OF COVID-19



## ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



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**"Great opportunities exist in networks, and relating with people which is also important in research. Knowledge is not static and technology has made knowledge sharing and transfer easy and fast."**

*Olayinka Adeniyi, QES-AS incoming scholar, University of Ottawa*

**Cover photos, top to bottom:**

1. Michele Monroy-Valle (right), incoming QES-AS scholar, University of Saskatchewan, with two students from Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, doing field work in Chichicastenango, Guatemala in the area of malnourishment in children, pregnant women and elders.
2. Julia Jansen-Van Vuuren, incoming QEScholar, Queen's University
3. From left to right: Kevin Duong, Emily Brown and Amandine Olimpiev, outgoing QEScholars, University of Alberta, doing their nursing practicum in Ghana.
4. Robbie Venis (left), outgoing QES-AS scholar, Carleton University, at SafeWater Ceramics of East Africa - A Tanzanian Social Enterprise Manufacturing Ceramic Water Filters in Arusha .

The Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarships (QES) program is funded by contributions from the provinces, the private sector and the Government of Canada. The QES Advanced Scholars program (QES-AS) is made possible with financial support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

A list of donors is featured on the website: <http://www.queenelizabethscholars.ca/partners/>



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Canadian Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Scholarships (QES) program continued to offer emerging global leaders outstanding opportunities to develop their study, work integrated learning, research, leadership, networking and community engagement skills during a difficult year. The program's success in 2020-2021 reflects the resiliency of participating universities and QES partner organizations in the Global South and Canada.

In particular, QES project leaders acted quickly to repatriate QEScholars from around the world to Canada or other home countries as the COVID-19 virus spread in spring 2020. Project teams maintained strong relationships with partner institutions, even when no programming was being delivered because of the pandemic. Despite layered challenges, networking and leadership development still took place virtually.

Thanks to IDRC funding, a new RFP focusing on SDG 5 was launched, with Canada's universities again showing a huge interest. The QES-AS West Africa Selection Committee was able to have a very successful virtual meeting to advance this new initiative. New West Africa projects were onboarded virtually instead of through campus visits, which allowed participants from West African partner institutions and research placement partners to take part.

At every level over the past year, from partnership placements to scholar support and administration, the importance of personal relationships was highlighted – and those relationships made all the difference.

The QES program is managed through a unique partnership of the Rideau Hall Foundation, Community Foundations of Canada, Universities Canada and Canadian universities. Since 2015, 2231 scholars have been funded through 106 projects in 73 countries. Projects have been designed and led by 46 Canadian universities.

In follow-up surveys, scholars report improvements in their knowledge and skills, particularly their communication, technical and leadership skills, because of their QES experience. They also report an increase in their awareness of the issues facing local and global communities.

This report looks at how the QES program continued to develop a global community of scholars in 2020-2021 through leadership, networking, work integrated learning, study and research opportunities.

The following pages share an overview of what has been learned and accomplished this past year through evaluation data, anecdotes and lessons learned so that stakeholders can better understand the reach and lasting impact of this critical program, even during a year of such uncertainty.

“QEScholars who have successfully completed their placements have trained other faculty members at AKU and have increased their capacity through advanced research activities. The diversity within the QES has enabled AKU to look at various projects and strategies through a different lens and aspects that have ultimately improved project outcomes. The scholars have had an impact on the partnership, building capacity and mentorship between the Universities and expanding the research agendas between both institutions for joint opportunities.”

*Fareena Feroze, Manager, University Partnership Office, The Aga Khan University, Pakistan, University of Calgary partner*



SANDRA CHOI (LEFT), UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA AND KAYLIN ARASON (RIGHT), UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA, OUTGOING QESCHOLARS, TRAVELLING OUTSIDE OF BANGKOK, THAILAND.



>> Scholar profile

## Environmental scientist 'Kristal Ocean' leads youth activism against plastic pollution



Kristal Ambrose, also known as 'Kristal Ocean,' has taken an unusual path in marine sciences – she was a researcher first, then went to university.

"I started my academic career in reverse," says the 2017-18 QES Scholar, "working first in marine sciences as a research assistant, right out of high school." She's been in the field for 14 years now, leading both research efforts and impactful youth activism against

plastic pollution in the waters of her home country, The Bahamas.

After sailing across the Pacific Ocean in 2012 to study the Western Garbage Patch, Kristal returned home and started a plastic pollution revolution. In 2013, she began The Plastic Beach Project; a citizen science project to study plastic concentrations on beaches of The Bahamas. She then started the non-profit Bahamas Plastic Movement (BPM) to raise awareness and find solutions to the growing problem.

Through the BPM, Kristal has spread the word on the plastics crisis with thousands through educational lectures, summer camp programs and citizen science projects around the world.

Kristal took part in the QES program while completing her master's studies at Dalhousie University in Marine Management, with a focus on plastic pollution research.

While a QES Scholar, she moderated an event at the United Nations Environment Assembly meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on international governance for marine litter. In 2018, Kristal and her youth delegation successfully advocated for the banning of single use plastics, Styrofoam and balloon releases in The Bahamas by 2020.

**"I wouldn't be in this next step in my academic career if it wasn't for that QES opportunity."**

*Kristal Ambrose, incoming scholar 2017-2018, Dalhousie University*

Kristal is a 2020 recipient of the Goldman Environmental Prize, the world's most prestigious award for grassroots environmental activists.

She recently moved to Sweden to pursue her PhD in marine debris monitoring. She's scaling up her research, looking at the various methods of data collection around marine plastics used in Caribbean, with plans to use the findings to inform public policy.

Kristal says taking part in the QES program was a vital step in advancing her research career. "I wouldn't be in this next step in my academic career if it wasn't for that QES opportunity. That research component was so important to me. I had great research supervision and the experience opened so many doors."

Through QES, Kristal did an internship in Norway and built connections there, something she's found very beneficial in transitioning to her PhD in Sweden.

Over the longer term, Kristal says she would like to establish a regional database on marine plastic and train "people to go out and collect data on a consistent basis" – while continuing to grow the Bahamas Plastic Movement.

Where are  
they now?



### Zahra Dhubow

Outgoing scholar 2016, International Development, Saint Mary's University  
Went to Uganda

Currently: pursuing a Master's of Public Administration at Dalhousie University. Until recently, coordinator at Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (<https://www.isans.ca>)



### Ali Akbar

Outgoing scholar 2017, Public Policy and International Development, University of Toronto  
Went to Tanzania

Currently: Policy Intern, Deputy Minister's office, Ministry of Long-Term Care, Province of Ontario and finishing a master's degree in Public Policy and Administration at Ryerson University

# INTRODUCTION

Emerging leaders from across Canada and around the world are learning the power of knowledge, inquiry, discovery and community engagement through the QES program. They're creating lasting impacts at home and abroad through cross-cultural exchanges encompassing international education, hands-on research and professional experiences.

These formative experiences are enabled through innovative international projects designed by Canadian universities – projects that reflect each institution's expertise and their collaboration with over 650 institutions worldwide. Projects build on each university's strengths, with objectives that meet the needs of their scholars, faculty and administration.

## Collaboration and decentralization

The success of the QES Program has been attributed to its unique partnership model and project decentralization. The QES Program is managed by three partner organizations – Rideau Hall Foundation, Universities Canada and Community Foundations Canada – with the support of government bodies, crown corporations, private sector organizations and universities.



ALLAN YU IWAMA (RIGHT) INCOMING QES-AS SCHOLAR, YORK UNIVERSITY, DOING FIELDWORK IN CHILOÉ ISLAND, CHILE, INTERVIEWING PATRICIO COLIVORO, INDIGENOUS MAPUCHE-WILLICHE FROM THE MON FEN OF YALDAD COMMUNITY.

## Program objectives

1. Develop global citizens through enriched academic, professional and cross-cultural experiences.
2. Activate a new generation of enterprising leaders in Canada and around the world through facilitating lasting local and global community engagement.
3. Enhance collaboration and deepen peer relationships among Queen Elizabeth Scholars for an enriched experience and to facilitate personal and professional growth.

## Program expected outcomes

1. Increased knowledge and skills through academic and professional experiences of young global leaders.
2. Enhanced networking between Canadians and fellow citizens of the world.
3. Increased contributions to local and global communities by young leaders.

650+  
PARTNER  
ORGANIZATIONS

# 2020-2021 AT A GLANCE

The QES program, having just completed its sixth year, continues to build a track record of success in supporting and developing global leaders.

## By the numbers, since 2015:

2231

scholars funded

106

projects supported

46

Canadian universities

73

QEScholars going to/  
coming from 73 countries

## By the numbers, this reporting period

(April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021)

86 new scholars  
received funding

## QES 2014/2017 Scholars

98%

of scholars reported  
increasing their  
knowledge and skills

85%

of scholars reported  
increased leadership skills

94%

of scholars reported an  
increase in their awareness  
of issues faced by local  
and global communities

## QES-Advanced Scholars

97%

of scholars reported  
increasing their  
knowledge and skills

93%

of scholars reported  
enhanced leadership,  
professional, research  
and soft skills

100%

of scholars reported  
receiving transferable  
technology or science  
skills training

Stats are cumulative

## Scholars' reflections

### Nolan Hokanson, outgoing QEScholar, University of Alberta

"I learned that I have a very limited view of the world that is determined and influenced by the country that I was raised in, the family that I have, and the experiences I have had over my life. I have learned that the lens that I view the world through is unique to me, but it doesn't mean that I am seeing the whole picture."

### Bertha Vallejo Carlos, incoming QES-AS scholar, University of Ottawa

"The Research Placement Partner gave me the opportunity to analyze the relevance that technological management within a firm has on its resilience, particularly to face challenges of unknown duration, such as COVID-19. I loved the long chats and conversations with other members of the team, particularly the different disciplines perspectives on the same problem."

### Leena Barisa, outgoing QEScholar, Queen's University

"Leadership comes in many different forms. I always think of leadership as being the person who is loudest or in charge. But leadership can also include being an organizer or leading by example through behaviour. I am a relatively shy person and I have learned that I can still be a leader even if all the attention is not on me."

### Hafiz Muhammad Umar Raza, incoming QES-AS scholar, Simon Fraser University

"Networking with researchers at SFU and industry made strong networks for mutual benefits. I am extremely satisfied with the level of engagement in networking activities during the research program."

"The QES-AS programme is one of only a few programmes that has responded directly to the needs and constraints faced by Southern researchers."

*Gareth Hayson, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town, South Africa, Wilfrid Laurier University Partner*

## Leadership and networking

QEScholars continue to develop their leadership and networking skills by immersing themselves in different cultures and participating in projects that make the world a better place. By focusing on the pillars of *leadership and networking* the QES program further strengthened its global community of young leaders over the past year.

Where are they now?



### Kyle Wiebe

Outgoing scholar 2017, Urban Planning, McGill University

Went to Kenya

Currently: Associate, International Institute for Sustainable Development  
<https://www.iisd.org/>



### Jeremy Wagner

Outgoing scholar 2015, Political Science, University of the Fraser Valley

Went to Tanzania

Currently: completing a PhD in Global Governance and QES-AS funded Research Fellow, Hungry Cities Partnership program at the Balsillie School of International Affairs



## The pandemic pivot:

# How QES- Advanced Scholars (QES-AS) projects adapted and got creative in response to COVID-19



VANDANET HING, INCOMING QES-AS SCHOLAR, UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA, SAYING GOODBYE TO COLLEAGUES DURING THE PANDEMIC.

The QES-AS program was no exception to the tumult caused by the COVID-19 pandemic within higher education and research communities this past year. Some research activities were temporarily shelved. Other plans shifted in scope and methodology. At the same time, creative thinking and innovative solutions opened up new opportunities and revealed a few silver linings.

## The conference conundrum

Seminars and conferences are fundamental to knowledge sharing and networking among QES-AS funded researchers. But this year in-person events weren't an option.

"For some of them it was just so smooth," says Ellie Perkins, project lead at York University. "[Scholars] just said, 'okay we'll do this online.'" York's three-year project brings together scholars from around the world to research climate justice and democratic commons governance in the context of an innovative ecological economics partnership.

Dr. Perkins says some scholars made special efforts to share their webinars within the QES-AS network. In the case of York's Brazilian scholars, they created the [QES Climate Justice Webinar: Open Science and Citizen Science to Promote Climate Justice](#), where several QES Climate Justice scholars and collaborators presented on their respective QES Climate Justice projects.

## Scholars go the distance

Despite the more limited bandwidth and extreme pressures on many African researchers, one of York's South African scholars organized an entire webinar series on climate justice, "with big name speakers," she says. With Dr. Perkins' help, he reached out to other QES-AS scholars and universities to invite their participation.

Several QES-AS scholars with the University of Ottawa's project, [Open African Innovation Research: New and Emerging Researchers in West Africa](#), found creative ways to keep their research going, including using part of their QES-AS funding to pay for consultants in another country to conduct field work. Others created new collaborations within the project to complete their work. For example, a scholar living in Nigeria collaborated with another who was unable to travel there for her field work.

"Almost everyone else couldn't do field work or was significantly

delayed so several had to change their topic," says Victoria Schorr, project lead at the University of Ottawa. "Some reformulated their scope of work."

## Externships challenge

Many project leads found externship placements challenging during the pandemic. "In one case, I spent eight months trying to find people places and getting no response or a yes and then they backed out," says Ms. Schorr.

Others had an easier time transitioning to an online placement. Grace Marquis, project lead with [McGill's LINKIN-Ghana project](#), says one scholar was supposed to work at a partner's offices, but since it involved computer work the placement easily transferred to a virtual placement. The McGill University-University of Ghana partnership project seeks to improve the lives of adolescent girls and women farmers in rural Ghana through expanding knowledge and skills, and improving access to services and markets.

Scholars at Ryerson University's QES-AS project, Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change in Colombia, had finished computer modelling and were ready for field work on the intrusion of saline water into Colombian coastal aquifers, where residents normally get fresh water, when the pandemic arrived.

The team was looking at the problem of flooding and rising sea levels, which causes salt water to go through soil and sand and eventually reach aquifers, causing contamination. "Most of these aquifers are now contaminated with saline water," says Mehrab Mehrvar, project lead. "It's a danger."

But the field work was impossible in a country hard hit by COVID-19. "There were also protests against the governments and lockdowns," says Dr. Mehrvar. "I've never seen Colombia in such a situation."

To secure externships amid these challenges, Dr. Mehrvar reached out to research partners to find ways scholars could work remotely to address problems the partners were having.

"They listed all these problems and with the help of some other professors from Colombian universities, we broke down the problems and came up with solutions and projects. For example, one of our QES-AS scholars was responsible for writing two manuals: "Guide to the Formulation of Plans of Sanitation and Management of Discharges" and "Handbook for Management and Handling Solid Waste" for the City of Cartagena, Colombia. She did not have to go to the place; she did it on computer."

## Layered hardships

For many scholars, the hardships caused by COVID-19 are layered.

"Most of our scholars are women, most have children. When schools are closed...and most are doing post-doc or PhD at the same time [it's very difficult]," says Ms. Schorr. "A number of them or their partners work at jobs or they [lost their jobs], so they are also having financial burdens that they were not expecting. This caused delays in their research."

Dr. Marquis has seen delays as well. "There are multiple levels of delay. At the University of Ghana there are delays because of changes in schedules. Faculty are teaching twice as much because of split classes. It puts limits on going out into the field for some.

"One of our scholars has three young girls and they are at home," she says. "So trying to get everything done is a challenge."

### Remote leadership

The same kinds of university issues affected project leadership and administration in Canada. "I would say there was a delay with all York staff working from home," says Dr. Perkins. "It has made the bureaucracy a little more challenging for things such as transferring funds."

On the bright side, Dr. Perkins says communicating with international scholars has still gone smoothly. "They answer me so quickly," she says, adding that she is also mindful to pass along "anything that sounds like an interesting webinar or conference that they might be able to participate in" during the pandemic.

"Some respond that they don't really have the bandwidth to participate," she says. "There are differences in access to technology and the hardships they face."

For Dr. Marquis, not being able to travel to Ghana and work with scholars on the ground has been a big setback.

"Ghana is the centre of my research, so I am regularly there. I have great colleagues in Ghana but for me it's a challenge because I can't be there. So we do the best we can." That means having regular project conferences and conversations online with all the scholars, but she says, "it's not the same as being able to get out in the field."

Project leadership during the pandemic has meant finding new ways to add value. At Ryerson, Dr. Mehrvar gave all the scholars access to the university library for e-books and journals. "They are very productive," he says. "And they love this project."

Last-minute travel problems were also a major challenge for project leads. At Ryerson, "it was really challenging because they closed the airports in Colombia," says Dr. Mehrvar, noting that some international scholars were stranded in Toronto.

"Some had to stay longer than they were supposed to." That meant additional emails and budget analysis. "Sometimes hundreds of emails in one day... We had to squeeze [funds] from here and there to support them."

Waterloo also worked to support scholars stranded by border shutdowns. "A number of students were stranded here when the pandemic hit," says Kevin Boehmer, managing director of the university's Water Institute and project co-ordinator. "We really had to ensure their health and safety first and foremost. Some were here so long that they wrote extra research papers that weren't originally planned."

Other QES-AS scholars with Waterloo's project, [Water Security as a Foundation for Healthy Communities and Sustainable](#)

[Livelihoods](#), were unable to travel to the university. "The mobility issue put a stop to a fundamental building block of the whole QES program," says Mr. Boehmer. "We still haven't been able to change that, other than getting students home eventually."

### Silver linings

In most aspects of life during the pandemic, there have been a few silver linings – and the QES-AS program is no exception.

At the University of Ottawa, new externship opportunities opened up with more virtual work options. "The one advantage was you no longer had the residence requirement," says Ms. Schorr. "So I did get people placements in other locations that would not have worked otherwise."

For one Waterloo researcher, the pandemic enriched her findings. Before the pandemic, she had collected field data on emergency preparedness for water and sanitation at Kenyan health facilities. She wanted to investigate the resiliency of these facilities. When COVID-19 struck, she decided to revisit her interviewees virtually and collected a second set of data.

"It was a live experiment," says Mr. Boehmer. "A comparative analysis... This is going to make for a much stronger piece of research."

In another example, a Waterloo professor was able to recruit more female scholars because the usual requirement of spending 90 days in Canada – a barrier for some women – was dropped during the pandemic.

With conferences going virtual-only, Waterloo found their African and Asian scholars were able to participate in more events that would have been prohibitive in cost if physical attendance was required.

Mr. Boehmer also reports that some scholars found being stranded in their home community gave them more time for meaningful community engagement. One Waterloo scholar said the extra time allowed him to help youth groups and primary schools write proposals for infrastructure improvements to the school system.

"People put the extra time to good use," says Mr. Boehmer.

"The pandemic hurts, yes, but we learned a lot of lessons too," says Dr. Mehrvar. "Before we didn't have Zoom calls. Now we have weekly virtual meetings that even include QES alumni scholars because they are interested in continuing this project. Some of them are professors now. So that is the positive impact that came out of the pandemic."

Two of these QES alumni were awarded Emerging Leaders in the Americas Program (ELAP) scholarship to come back to Dr. Mehrvar's Ryerson University Laboratory to continue the experimental research work they missed during pandemic. They will return to Ryerson University in January 2022.

Where are  
they now?



#### Christiane Ndedi Essombe

Outgoing scholar 2015, Public Health,  
Université de Montréal

Went to Tanzania

Currently: Equity, Diversity and  
Inclusion Strategic Advisor, Doctors  
without Borders Canada  
<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/>



#### Valdine Flaming

Outgoing scholar 2017, Disability Studies,  
University of Manitoba

Went to New Zealand

Currently: Indigenous Project Officer/  
Indigenous Curriculum Specialist, University  
College of the North <https://www.ucn.ca>

## Cultivating *leadership*

In addition to the daily leadership development opportunities QEScholars experience, participating universities offer a variety of special events focused on leadership skills. In 2020-2021 these included:

### University of Alberta (QES-AS)

At the University of Alberta, the Peter Lougheed Leadership College, in collaboration with the Global Nursing Office, presented a session on "When Leadership Gets in the Way of Leading". Participants worked interactively with Dr. Cristina Stasia, Director of Instruction, Provost & Vice-President Academic

### Lakehead University (QES-AS)

Lakehead University offered "Skills of Communication" a full-day course featuring the tools and tips of better verbal communication. It tested assumptions and mental models and taught the Ladder of Inference. The course goal was to make researchers more aware of the tools available to help them become better communicators.

### University of Waterloo (QES-AS)

The University of Waterloo's Water Institute offered Water Leadership HQP training seminars. Water Leadership is a program offered by the Water Institute that help participants develop applied research impact skills to help catalyze knowledge into action. The training sessions cover a range of topics related to Knowledge Mobilization (KM) and leadership development.

### >> Project Profile

## Advancing gender equality by empowering healthcare professionals in West Africa



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: PROF MARIE HATEM, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL; 2018 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER DR. DENIS MUKWEGE; PROF LISE LAMOTHE, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL; AND DR CHRISTINE AMISI, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE PANZI FOUNDATION.

(ESPUM), plans to address through a new QES-Advanced Scholars West Africa project. The initiative is rooted in the university's Hygeia network, led by Prof. Hatem. The network aims to strengthen gender equality and equity in global healthcare and combat violence against women, female adolescents and girls.

Benefiting from a close collaboration between the ESPUM and the faculties of medicine, nursing, law, arts and sciences, the QES-AS West Africa project will also rely on important African partners: the West African Health Organization (WAHO) and its network in 15 countries; the ICART-PANZI Center, directed by the renowned gynecologist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr. Denis Mukwege; the Denis Mukwege Center of Excellence of the Evangelical University in Africa; the Higher Institute of Nurses and Midwives (ISSI-Kinshasa); and the Civil Society Health Network of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Twenty Francophone scholarship holders from West Africa and Canada (at least 60% of whom are women) will enhance

It's difficult to empower women if the professionals trying to help them are not themselves empowered. That's a challenge facing efforts to advance gender equality in West Africa, and one that Marie Hatem, professor at the School of Public Health

their skills through research activities, community internships, webinars, conferences and workshops. These formative activities will be offered in social-health and legal settings from an experiential, transformational and interdisciplinary perspective.

Prof. Hatem and her team plan to launch the first scholar competition in summer 2021, so that host organizations and supervisors can receive the first candidates during the 2022 winter and spring semesters.

She plans to travel to West Africa this summer to help launch the project there, and has been in discussions with partners about potential externships in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "We are confident we will have the partners in place for welcoming and supervision of the scholars," she says. Community partners and supervisors are already in place in Montreal for incoming scholars.

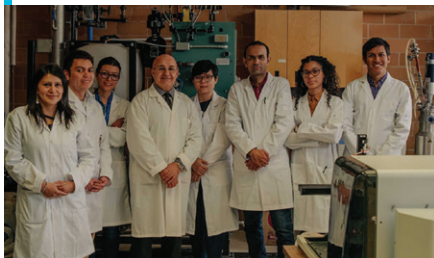
Initial research will include a review of all nursing and midwife programs in 15 countries. Programs for physicians will be reviewed next, all with an eye to developing a culture of research and evidence-based thinking and practicing in healthcare professions.

The QES-AS West Africa project has the potential to build a strong network to support the continuation of this work, says Prof. Hatem. "It's a small number of scholars but it will be a starting point to develop the network. These people will be connected to both the QES network and our own network around the world."

"The big project idea is to help empower all health resources and institutions working with women to reinforce what exists, develop what doesn't exist and make them a model for the region and other programs and countries," says Prof. Hatem. "So, in the long run, mutual aid would take place among the resources of the African network, essentially."

## >> Project Profile

# Scholars address climate change impact in coastal Colombia



DR. MEHRAB MEHRVAR (4TH FROM THE LEFT) WITH QES-AS SCHOLARS IN THE LAB AT RYERSON.

Climate change is exacerbating problems such as flooding, coastal erosion and droughts in the Colombian Caribbean Region – affecting food security, soil biodiversity and livelihoods. At the current rate, a loss of 17 to 20 per cent of the land is predicted to occur within the next 50 years.

Dr. Mehrab Mehrvar, Associate Chair for Graduate Studies in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Ryerson University and the project lead, is working to change this outcome with the help of the QES Advanced Scholars program. Ryerson's QES-AS project, Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change in Colombia, focuses on the problem of salinity intrusion into aquifers, where residents would normally get their drinking water. With sea levels rising, saline water is seeping through the sand and soil, contaminating aquifers.

Eighteen researchers from Colombia and Canada, many at the doctoral level, have worked on the project so far, collaborating with the University of Cartagena, the National University of Colombia, the Colombian School of Engineering and Western

University. With the support of the QES-AS program, at the University of Cartagena, an experimental model was developed to mimic the effects of the rising sea level on aquifers, allowing for data collection and analysis.

"The scholars were grouped into different projects, working on experimental or theoretical work to predict how long it takes for aquifers to get contaminated," explains Dr. Mehrvar.

Plans for field work recently had to be adapted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions with Colombian partners identified impactful projects the scholars could work on remotely. In one case, a QES-AS scholar developed two manuals on solid waste collection, disposal and management to meet needs of Cartagena, a port city on Colombia's Caribbean coast.

"They were very successful," Dr. Mehrvar says of the QES-AS scholars. They travelled to new places, expanded their knowledge on the culture and language. Since the start of the pandemic, they have continued their work using simulation, computer work and online correspondence. The QES-AS project has created space for collaboration between current and alumni QES-AS scholars.

Along with several publications in peer-reviewed journals and presentations in international conferences, QES-AS scholars are in the process of publishing a book on the project.

**"The scholars... [worked] on experimental or theoretical work to predict how long it takes for aquifers to get contaminated."**

*Project lead Dr. Mehrab Mehrvar*

## Update on Latin American projects

In April 2020, six Canadian universities were to begin QES activities funded by The Waugh Family Foundation. COVID-19 had a direct impact on the launch of all six projects and it is hoped that scholarships will be offered in the near future. Canadian universities and their Caribbean partner institutions are eager to move forward and over the past year have focused on maintaining their relationships through emails, developing MoUs, bi-monthly/quarterly check-ins and online meetings using video conferencing platforms such as WebEx, Zoom and Microsoft Teams.



## Outstanding *networking* opportunities

### Contributing to lifelong learning McGill University (QES-AS)

McGill University's Dr. Nii Addy organized an event for the McGill Community for Life-Long Learning where multiple scholars presented their work to retired professionals. This was an excellent opportunity for scholars to interact with their cohort of scholars as well as others.

### Keeping scholars connected University of Toronto (QES-AS)

The University of Toronto project created a What's App group to facilitate a community of practice, informal feedback and learning among the cohort of scholars. Scholars continue to stay connected with each other via this platform.

### Collaborating virtually University of Victoria (QES-AS)

The University of Victoria and the Jigme Singye Wangchuck (JSW) School of Law in Bhutan organized and co-hosted the Conference on Public Law, Legal Orders and Governance in Asia (online), involving current and former QES-AS scholars.

### Guiding young researchers Queen's University (QES-AS)

Queen's University reports that two Thai/Burmese research partners helped on the supervisory committee of two Queen's undergraduate research students.

### Sharing knowledge online

#### University of Ottawa (QES-AS)

The University of Ottawa organized Monthly Brownbag Seminars at each hub – initially in person and online during



BRUNHEL VAMBI N'TAMBU (LEFT), INCOMING QES-AS SCHOLAR, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONCTON UNDERTAKING FIELD RESEARCH ON AGROFORESTRY SYSTEMS FOR YAM PRODUCTION TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, WITH DR. DAMASE KHASA, HIS RESEARCH SUPERVISOR, UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL.

pandemic. Now the entire Open AIR network can participate in these seminars, regardless of location. QES-AS Fellows present their research in a closed setting, allowing them to bounce ideas off each other and be inspired for comparative and collaborative research.

### >> Scholar profile

## Scholar helps inform climate-smart agriculture in Pakistan



SAJIDA SULTANA AT THE 24TH UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (COP24) HELD IN POLAND.

Through the University of Waterloo's QES-AS project, Sajida Sultana – enrolled in a PhD program in Social and Ecological Sustainability – was able to provide valuable research insights related to technological advancements in agriculture to organizations on the ground in Pakistan.

In particular, the United Nations Development Program – GEF Small Grants Program (UNDP GEF-SGP) proved to be an excellent Research Placement Partner on the ground in Pakistan, in

collaboration with partner institution Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam (SAUT). "They provided me all the right connections," she says. Dr. Sultana was guided by local stakeholders in selecting the five areas within Sindh province that would be the focus of her research.

"It was very interesting to see comparisons among the study districts, where climate-smart practices and technologies were already being used."

Most striking was the disparity between resources and facilities in the different study districts. In some communities the urgent need for basic resources like clean water and food understandably took priority over any exploration of CSA technological advances and practices in agriculture.

"Even if we introduced a new policy [for climate-smart agriculture (CSA)] it wouldn't help because there was no water there, in some areas," she says. "We compared that with areas where there is plenty of water, and good facilities. What I saw was that adaptability is easier there, compared to other areas where there are so many social and economic issues involved."

The timing of Dr. Sultana's QES-AS research was fortunate, as the government of Pakistan was just starting to develop a CSA policy for the country. The concept was fairly new there, and Dr. Sultana explained to many stakeholders what CSA means.

During her research, she attended International Agriculture Conference organized by SAUT in Pakistan, where she shared her research experience with participants from different countries. She later shared her research findings at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) conference - 2018 in Katowice, Poland, which was well received by the Ministry of Climate Change in Pakistan. After her research she worked for UNFAO for one year as a Climate Smart Agriculture Specialist. Her results expertise helped inform the work of the UNDP and UNFAO.

Her findings highlighted the disparities she found, and their impact. She stressed that "some communities were not talking about agriculture; they were talking about other issues like having no electricity and no water and health issues. We have to be very sensitive to these other issues people are suffering from."

Dr. Sultana proposed that interventions focus on developing a package of supports before going into a community to introduce new CSA practices and technologies.

**“The Center is more confident in designing research training program in which QEScholars become key resource persons to provide the training and to be the speakers for our research conferences. Another noticeable support for the Center is their improved capacity to help the Center draft research grants and proposals.”**

*Soy Kimsan, Director, Center for the Study of Humanitarian Law, Cambodia, University of Victoria partner*

## » Project Profile

# Concordia project to promote gender equality lays foundation for long-term collaboration with West Africa

Project Lead Océane Jasor, assistant professor in sociology and anthropology, hopes Concordia University's first QES project – Gender equality and the decolonization of knowledge: transnational collaboration between West Africa and Canada – will strengthen African studies at the university and establish a long-term collaboration with West Africa.

Part of the QES-Advanced Scholars West Africa (QES-AS-WA) initiative, the Concordia project comprises 16 researchers – eight from Concordia and eight from West Africa. Five scholars from Concordia have already been identified and Dr. Jasor is still working with her partners in Senegal, Ghana and Ivory Coast to complete the team there.

The scholars will bring a multidisciplinary lens to their work, with areas of expertise including women's studies, geography, English literature, political science and international relations – all with a focus on gender and/or Africa.

“We're all coming from different disciplines to bring a different critical framework but also a specific methodology and challenge some of the core theories for the disciplines we all reside in by getting knowledge from the ground up, lived experiences,” says Dr. Jasor.

QES-AS-WA projects all focus on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5, which states that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary condition for the establishment of peaceful, prosperous and sustainable societies.

Julio Sevilla, international project manager at Concordia International, says the project also reflects Concordia's growing

commitment to collaborative global research.

“We're thrilled that Concordia University has joined the Queen Elizabeth Scholars (QES) family”, he says. “This is an exciting opportunity for increasing our social impact and forging closer partnerships with West African partners and other QES participants across Canada.”

Concordia's QES-AS-WA scholars will explore global gender discourses and the advancement of transnational feminist practices.

“The project focuses on localized and context-based responses on the ground to transnational discourses, to gender mainstreaming,” says Dr. Jasor. “We want to complement and complicate, if possible, those kinds of mainstream discourses with discourses and practices from below. We're looking for local agency, local agendas and local responses to those big transnational responses to see what the tensions are and also the opportunities to move gender equality forward.”

“The really important aspect is community immersion, being really immersed in the everyday realities and lived experience of men and women involved in community organizations, NGOs, and partnering with them on the ground in Canada and West Africa, especially Ghana, to get to the core of what they are trying to do.”

Activities will include conferences, workshops, joint publications and partnerships with various women's organizations, from both Canada and West Africa, such as the Table des Groupes de Femmes de Montréal.

Where are  
they now?



### Stephen Omondi

Incoming scholar 2017, Biological Sciences, Université Laval

From Kenya

Currently: Deputy Regional Director, Central Highlands Ecoregion Research Program, Kenya Forestry Research Institute <https://www.kefri.org/>



### Oluwayemisi Olugboji

Incoming scholar 2015-2017, Computer Science, University of Winnipeg

From Nigeria

Currently: Business Intelligence Developer, Canada Revenue Agency

## >> Scholar profile

# Internship in elite sports brings undergrad out of comfort zone



JOSHUA FERNANDES (LEFT) FACILITATED AT THE BOTSWANA NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE COACHES CONFERENCE.

Joshua Fernandes heard about the QES during first year in sports management at Brock University. He was keenly interested, but thought, “there is no way I’m going to get this.” He saw it as a dream at the time, but that dream came true in fourth year.

He was a big track and field fan at the time, and his favourite athlete was in Botswana – one of the host countries for Brock’s QES placements. Brock’s QES project was a collaboration with Commonwealth Games Canada, which oversaw all placements.

Joshua says he had always played it safe in life, so traveling to Botswana for research was a big step outside of his comfort zone.

“I said, ‘I have this opportunity in front of me and I need to take it.’”

In Botswana, he joined other students in work on Long-Term Athlete Development for the country’s badminton federation. They met with national team coaches, administrators and clubs in gathering the information they needed to develop a strategy.

“We found a lack of communication from top to bottom,” he says. “So we wanted to develop those communication lines.”

Along the way, Joshua and the other scholars learned that solutions in one country don’t necessarily transfer to another.

## “QES is life changing.”

*Joshua Fernandes, outgoing scholar 2019, Brock University*

“I think we were very ignorant at first,” he recalls. “We thought everything would work like in Canada.” After learning that lesson, they set about making modifications that would suit the country. For example, the job of head coach of a national team is not necessarily full-time in Botswana, so coaches may not be able to communicate at all times.

“I think for me it gave me perspective,” he says of the QES experience. “I thought it was just going to be sports all the time in Botswana, but it wasn’t like that...I met so many people outside of the sports industry who were able to provide guidance on my future career path.

“QES is life changing.”

In particular, he was moved by the sense of community he encountered. “I felt that in Botswana and it really stuck with me.”

That community experience fit well with Joshua’s first job after graduation, as programs and outreach coordinator with the Toronto Inner-City Rugby Foundation – an organization dedicated to building community through rugby. The foundation works in 31 of Toronto’s underserved, low-income neighbourhoods to reduce the financial, geographical, and cultural barriers that prevent children and youth from participating in the sport.

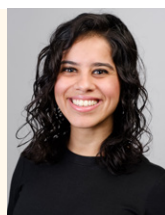
Where are they now?



### Saurabh Patankar

Incoming scholar 2016, Forestry/Wood Science, University of British Columbia  
From India

Currently: Assistant Professor, Institute of Chemical Technology, Bhubaneshwar Area, India



### Zohra Lakhani

Outgoing scholar 2018, Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development, University of St. Michael's College

Went to Kenya

Currently: Senior Policy Analyst, Global Affairs Canada

## QES-AS Longitudinal research study

Through an ongoing longitudinal study launched in 2017, Universities Canada is investigating the multilevel impact of the QES-AS scholarship. Focusing first on scholars, the study examines contributions of international research exchanges to several scholar outcomes. These include scholar collaboration, research quality, and development of leadership and global competencies. With QES-AS featuring a project-based approach involving Canadian institutions, LMIC partners, and community research placements, the study also focuses on gains to participating organizations. Finally, the study is looking at improving understanding of gender-sensitive, equitable and inclusive international scholarship programming to inform future scholarship design.

### >> Scholar profile

## QES experience leads researcher to develop mental health screening tools



SAMUEL ADJORLOLO  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
GHANA.

Samuel Adjorlolo is one of the QES-Advanced Scholars from Ghana working on the University of Alberta's Coming Together Project. The initiative is part of a larger partnership between the university's Faculty of Nursing and the University of Ghana's School of Nursing to develop a community of global nurse scholars and leaders.

Dr. Adjorlolo's research focus is maternal and child mental health. In this QES-AS project, he is examining maternal mental

health in Ghana, with plans to extend to other low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

"My interest is in examining the mental well-being of pregnant humans," he explains, "to follow up with them from one trimester to next until they deliver so I can understand how mental health conditions change over time and what is responsible for that, what factors influence it. [That will show] how can we minimize the risk factors."

Dr. Adjorlolo collected data until October 2020 for the first phase of his QES-AS research, towards his target of interviewing 702 pregnant people in Ghana of differing demographic backgrounds. His work was delayed a few months because of concerns about COVID-19.

"Some people expressed fear of participating because they see us as a medium of spread of the virus," he says. "Measures were put in place to keep everyone safe." He hopes to complete his research by end of June 2021. He is currently collecting data on those who had scored very high on some mental health measurements, to follow up and see

**"So what I'm doing next is to develop a very simple and basic screening tool, and then train as many nurses as possible to use this tool so they can use it in service provision."**

*Dr. Samuel Adjorlolo, QES-AS 2020-2021, Ghana*

how they are doing after giving birth.

"Mental health is a neglected area in our part of the world," he says of his interest in the topic. "There is little information, but it is in every facet of our lives. Every person is vulnerable, but pregnant humans are more vulnerable because of hormonal changes and other challenges."

"Research has made us understand that mental health issues contribute to adverse pregnancy outcomes and even adverse childhood outcomes."

"One of critical areas we noted is that there are many ways to screen for mental health issues in this population. So what I'm doing next is to develop a very simple and basic screening tool, and then train as many nurses as possible to use this tool so they can use it in service provision."

Improving the health of mothers, babies and children is one of the priorities of the Ghanaian health sector and the Ghana National Plan. The Coming Together Project supports Ghana in its efforts to achieve its maternal child targets outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 3-Good Health and Wellbeing.



"One of the advantages of working on the research during the COVID-19 time was the possibility to be part of workshops, conversations, and discussions all around the world that moved to virtual spaces."

*Paulina Larreategui, QES-AS scholar, University of Regina*

## >> Project profile

# Reciprocity is fundamental to project on urban community sustainability and food security in India and East Africa



THE QES PROJECT FOCUSES ON PLANNING POLICY AND FOOD SECURITY. CHILDREN ARE PARTICIPATING IN A PLAY ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP, AT MBALGALA CHAMAZI, DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA. THE INFORMATION RELATED TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY IS PART OF A PLANNING PROCESS.

what true reciprocity in relationships should look like," says Project Lead Cherie Enns, professor in the School of Land Use and Environmental Change at UFV. "It should never be about us going to help them; it's relationship building and learning together."

The project builds on Dr. Enns' work in her Global Community Lab. "I teach a lot of human-centred design challenges, urban planning etc. and students are always involved with applied research," she says. The QES projects have strengthened and grown the lab's initiatives and partnerships in areas such as housing, child friendly planning and food security in East Africa, India and its home community of Abbotsford, B.C.

Dr. Enns says the lab's relationships with organizations such as UN-Habitat and Ardhi City Lab are made stronger with the capacity, through QES, to place interns with them. The

Now in its second round of QES funding, opportunities for reciprocity and circular relationships stand out as key elements of the University of the Fraser Valley's QES project, Capacity Building for Policy and Planning in Kenya, Tanzania and India: A Focus on Food Systems and Urban Growth Management.

"The narrative is changing in terms of how we learn and

QES scholarships are awarded to undergraduate students in disciplines such as urban planning, design, geography and global development. So far 55 students have taken part: 44 Canadian interns and 11 international graduate students.

This research is also boosted for the long-term through the ongoing engagement of past QES scholars. "Those ongoing relationships...with former QES students who want to stay involved – well it's almost impossible to detangle their involvement before and after QES," she says. Our QES partners, virtual interns and former QES Scholars are collaboratively involved in developing methods, literature reviews, writing concept notes, conducting the research and report writing. Participants who have been selected to participate in QES once travel opens up have also engaged and stayed involved even with all the delays. They value the community of scholars that the program is building.

The interns' research opportunities are varied, all contributing to mutual learning around urban community sustainability, planning policy and food security. "A lot of my work focuses on informal settlements and children's rights and policy," says Dr. Enns. "So, in one project we are looking at how children play and where they play plus where food is grown, with eye on policy changes and mobilizing funding for interventions." A critical lens of justice, equity, diversity, decolonization and inclusion (JEDDI) is applied to all of our interaction.

She notes that most of UFV's undergraduate QES interns have gone on to graduate studies.

"Once you've gone away and come home, you rethink everything," she says. "I think Canada is really interested in genuine and transformative international experiences for youth and QES does this in an amazing way."

"Building a relationship with someone will forever be more important than establishing a clear answer to a question, disagreement, or debate. "

*Grace Werner, outgoing QEScholar, University of Alberta*

## » Project profile

# Exploring Indigenous language protection in Canada and Belize



AN ELDER IN THE LAGUNA COMMUNITY (BELIZE) SPEAKING TO CANADIAN STUDENTS ABOUT FOOD, LEARNING AND THE LAND.

advocates in global Indigenous language vitality and related issues, such as Indigenous food sovereignty and learning from the land.

The project – Engaging Indigenous Languages, Knowledges, Learning and the Land – led by Distinguished Professor, Faculty of Education, Sandra Kouritzin, will see 19 scholars engage in both community-driven and higher education approaches to these pressing issues. Sixteen scholarships are for Canadian graduate or senior undergraduate student interns, and three for visiting international graduate students selected by Belize partner organization, the Center for Engaged Learning Abroad, who will complete two-year master's degrees in Manitoba.

In 2019, project lead Dr. Kouritzin and colleagues at the university responded to the QES call for proposals for projects in Latin America and the Caribbean that focus on education, social services and health, made possible through funding from the Waugh Family Foundation. "The Foundation's Board believes cross-cultural learning is key to the advancement of communities in the region, and to the growth of Canada-Caribbean relations for the long term,"

The challenge of preserving and protecting Indigenous languages is shared around the world. A new QES project at the University of Manitoba aims to create a community of education scholars from Canada and Belize and support them to become leaders and

said Rick Waugh, founder of the Waugh Family Foundation, at the time of the announcement.

After learning of the new QES opportunity, Dr. Kouritzin says her team quickly engaged with their partners in Belize to discuss areas of research that would be mutually beneficial. "One of the areas was around teaching English as a second language," she says. "Mayan is the language in many communities in Belize. How do you ensure children keep their Mayan language while also learning English?"

The project will bring graduate and upper-year undergraduate students from Canada studying second language education or related areas, such as food sovereignty and soil sciences, to Belize for internships where they can see how these challenges are being addressed in the Caribbean country, and provide the same opportunity to scholars from Belize.

"We thought that perhaps the best thing was to have our students go there and learn from the land and understand another context of British colonialism, and at the same time... provide two-year scholarships for three Mayan students to come here and complete a master's degree in one of these areas." There are current no graduate programs in Belize.

"They will have experiences outside of the city of Winnipeg," she says of the Belizean researchers. "They will be able to travel up North to look at food security there. It's about mutual learning experiences that tap into those grounded experiences."

The Canadian and Belizean scholars will all take a University of Manitoba course called Global Indigenous Knowledges. Dr. Kouritzin says the team is hopeful the internships will begin in 2022.

In addition to Dr. Kouritzin, the project team at the university includes Dr. Clea Schmidt (education) and Dr. Satoru Nakagawa (arts). Their partner at the Center for Engaged Learning Abroad is Dr. Filiberto Penados.

"Planning and preparation is in your hands, control is not. Do not assume you have a grasp on anything - especially when you are conducting research with and for vulnerable communities. Things are constantly evolving and it is necessary for you to keep up with the tide. "

*Tasneem Mewa, outgoing QEScholar, University of Toronto*

Where are  
they now?



### **Matt Hurst**

Outgoing scholar 2015, Kinesiology,  
University of New Brunswick

Went to Barbados

Currently: Youth Sports Coordinator,  
Inuqatiguit Centre for Inuit Children,  
Youth and Families, Ottawa  
<https://inuqatiguit.ca/>



### **Jasmine Montagnese**

Outgoing scholar 2017, Occupational Therapy,  
Queen's University

Went to India

Currently: Occupational Therapy Program  
Coordinator – The University of Gondar/Queen's  
Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program



**QUEEN  
ELIZABETH**  
*Scholars*